

C. 1x0 W / mhh n fu. yes

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Notes on Morton Halperin, "Reshaping U.S. Nuclear Doctrine," November 1985 (on no-first-use).

Corrections needed:

--4: reasons for Hiroshima (not for fewer American casualties, or to save American treasure--there was no other way to use American treasure that offered a chance of achieving aims wrt SU.)

----8. Basic problem with recommendations: Why would keeping nuclear devices in a separate command, "keeping them away from themilitary," keeping them under direct Presidential command, and describing them and regarding them not as weapons but as "coercivedevices" have led to different behavior in the various crises in which nuclear weapons were threatened, assuming that different behavior is desirable? Obviously, coercion was the explicit purpose in a number of the cases, and a major purpose even when the immediate effect was to be "tactical".

For example, in the case of Dienbienphu, according to Bidault, two bombs were offered for the immediate destruction of the attackers in the vicinity of the base, while one or more bombswere for China, for explicitly coercive purposes.

Moreover, in any instance of use, whether "tactically" justified or not, the coercive threat of other tactical and of strategic weapons would be necessary (since the Soviets acquired nuclear capabilities) to deter retaliation by the Soviets or escalation (as allies or patrons of our opponent).

A coercive impact on the expectations of the targeted opponent will almost always be the major impact either of of threats or of combat use either on a battlefield or elsewhere, as Schelling has pointed out, and this will usually be the main intended effect, or at least, as Schelling says, it should be. But this does not at all rule out battlefield use, as MHH seems toassume. A coercive use of devices that is also addressed to immediate battlefield exigencies might well be the most "credible"implementation of a general coercive threat. A "doctrine" that nuclear weapons/devices may be used for tactical purposes on a battlefield--especially, to avert imminent defeat or capture of major tactical forces--may be the best, most convincing, basis forthe credibility of nuclear threats.

The point is that if "nuclear coercion" by the President is still to be allowed--regarded as both legitimate and potentially effective and necessary--then very little is likely to change in posture, planning or actual instances of nuclear threats, despite the proposed changes in organization and in conceptualization. "Coercion" includes virtually all our past experience with nuclearethreat-making. MHH's implication that coercion and tactical battlefield use are exclusive categories is invalid. (pp. 78-80)



Likewise, the distinction between "demonstration" use in Europe and battlefield use or "war-fighting" is not at all clear-cut, unless in scale (what are the targets of "demonstrative" strikes to be? MHH never says). And MHH does not say what the next step is to be if "demonstration" strikes fail to stop a Soviet advance. (This is a pretty big omission). (p. 78) (On p. 190 the reader is told that in the preferred approach, "beyond very limited 'demonstration' use there [would be] nothing but mutual devastation.")

MHH's repeated assertion that Presidents have been drawn only to "grand" coercive purposes of ending or winning a war, not to achieve battlefield objectives (even as part of a larger coercive purpose), and thus have been interested only in "decisive" strikes and targetting, is flatly wrong. (p. 17, 33-34, 64, 140; versus cases on 50, 56, 44, 47...) E.g., "Presidents will give serious consideration to initiating the use of nuclear explosive devices only when such use is designed to end the conflict by coercing the enemy; they will not consider first use to defeat an enemy force on the battlefield." This is flatly contradicted by consideration of nuclear weapons to defend Khe Sanh, planned use against Chinese artillery positions threatening Quemoy, proposed use against North Vietnamese dug-in artillery and troops surrounding Dien Bien Phu, threatened and planned use in connection with Berlin, 1961 (which would undoubtedly have been tactical initially). Thus, every time a US or allied force has been threatened with capture, being surrounded, battlefield use has been threatened or contemplated. (This was probably implicit in Truman's public mention of the nuclear option on November 30, 1950, which came the morning after American troops had been surrounded in Korea by Chinese forces).

Moreover, when Presidents make generalized, vague threats that nuclear war may result from events getting out of control if the Soviet Union does not back off or if it provokes conventional conflict--as was implicit in the Carter and Reagan doctrines for the Middle East, relating to Iran and the Persian Gulf, or in Nixon's nuclear alert in 1973--the presumed path to all-out nuclear war is probably understood by both sides to proceed via initial battlefield use.

In order to make the case look politically feasible for renouncing tactical weapons, battlefield use, and forward and naval deployment of nuclear weapons, MHH asserts that no President has perceived a potential utility for them anyway, even in periods of military crisis. The truth is not only that they have seen such utility, and could again, but that it is reasonable of some of them to conclude that their threats were actually helpful (whether or not they feel sure of this, whether or not the threats were the main or critical influence, and whether or not they are right). This past history is not, in fact, widely known among the "national security bureaucracy," (contrary to MHH's assertions: p. 32, and throughout the rest of Chapter Three). But to assert a contrary reality is to invite this history to be publicized: no doubt in a

manner that would exaggerate the impact of the nuclear threats but that would not necessarily be more tendentious than MHH's consistent deprecation of this impact. The argument here



underrates the incentives underlying the present nuclear policy, and thereby understates the strength of the obstacles to changing it.

MHH gives little attention to the degree to which various threats or preparations for FU in the past were, or were not, "bluffs." And he certainly understates the likelihood, as it appeared at the time at least, that the opponent might not back down. So much emphasis is put on the assertion that the threats were irrelevant or unnecessary or ineffective that very little attention is drawn to the most frightening aspect of this past history: that on a number of occasions, there was real risk--surely significant even if small--that American policies could have ended up in American use of nuclear weapons (in most cases, in regions and conflicts involving very peripheral interests in the eyes of most Americans). Indeed, the assertion that "We have, thus, had a de facto no first use policy," (p. 140) is very wrongly reassuring, as well as wrong. In order to make a change in policy and practice look misleadingly doable and even easy--"adoption of this policy would simply conform the official doctrine of the United States to reality" (same paragraph)--a major part of the motivation, perhaps the main reason for making the change is ignored. I can't really believe this is the way to get the change made.